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ABSTRACT

A study examined the reading values taught in reading textbooks over 200 years, including the top seven basals in use in U.S. public schools through 1995. A rare books collection at a university library was the major source of data. Value "labels" were determined for each selection. Results indicated that: (1) the average reader of 100 years ago taught some values in approximately 65% of the selections in the book, while the average number of selections with value content today is 35%; (2) the values of today are not only quantitatively different from the values of yesterday, they are also qualitatively different--from virtue, honesty, obedience, purity to good self-concept, appreciation of difference, and regard for nature. Findings suggest that one current direction of values teaching indicates that the use of children's literature and inquiry cycles will provide the context for "lived-values" in the classroom of the future, making textbooks a resource rather than "the curriculum." (Two figures of data are included.) (RS)

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Two Hundred Years of Values Teaching

In Reading Textbooks

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Introduction

The paper is a report of a two-year research study on values taught in reading textbooks over two hundred years, including the top seven basals in use in United States public schools through 1995. This study has convinced me that the textbooks of today attempt to inculcate only a fraction of the traditional values promulgated in textbooks of 100 years ago. Additionally, the values teaching now occurring in textbooks is not merely a reduction in quantity of the old values, but a set of qualitatively new values which reflect the current culture and ideology.

Perspective

Although textbooks represent current political, cultural, ideologies and economic values of the country in which they are published, the curriculum that a textbook communicates and the manner in which it is taught must walk a tightrope between defending the status quo and challenging that status quo. Because textbooks are conceived, developed, written and published in an atmosphere of cultural diversity wars, disputes, trade-offs, and prohibitions, the possibilities for presentation of balanced treatments of various social groups seems impossible. The authors, publishers, and marketing personnel all have their agendas which will include confrontations over the role, content, and use of the textbook--how the textbook will present the world and what will be transmitted to the young. The diverse consumers of textbooks also have their agendas and are becoming ever more vocal in their criticisms.

Apple (1991) believes that textbooks are controlled by a set of political and economic dynamics which have contributed to class, gender, and racial discrimination. Those who have been excluded from power have been denied this forum for relating their history, culture and labor. The other end of the political spectrum, the Council for Basic Education (Downs, 1982) has expressed the opinion that textbooks can deaden the minds of youth and/or make them into anarchists and anti-education activists; that many textbooks are communistic, socialistic, anti-American, unpatriotic, anti-free enterprise, anti-capitalistic, and anti-business. Whatever one's beliefs about particular textbooks, it is likely that for many students, the primary school textbooks (readers/literature, in particular) are the most important books that they will ever read. The pictures and concepts they form in their minds as a result of reading will be the basis for the formulation of their ideas about social justice, morality, etiquette, social relations, conflict, race, class and gender issues.

The minimum competency testing movement, the back to basics

movement, and several "values" movements have had the effect of turning the attention of their devotees to a simpler time in history of American education--era of the McGuffey reader and the values of 100 years ago. Indeed, most citizens would not dispute the necessity for teaching justice, loyalty, honesty, virtue, bravery and the whole list of values which were at the fore in generations past, but neither would the average citizen dispute the necessity for teaching tolerance, respect, appreciation of difference, social equality, and good self-concept which are part of our current cultural atmosphere. The questions which plague our era are WHAT should be taught in the way of values, WHO should teach them, and WHEN and WHERE should those values be taught. Should teachers, textbooks, and schools be the arbiters of values?

Objectives

1. To evaluate and categorize the selections in readers of 200 years in regard to values.
2. To compare the values being taught in today's readers with those of past generations.
3. To synthesize the historical influences and the reader content.
4. To demonstrate that influence of the textbook is waning in regard to the teaching of values.

Data Collection and Analysis

A rare books collection at the university library was a major source of data. The primary researcher and two assistants read the basals and determined a value "label" for each selection. In order to qualify for a particular value label, the selection needed to portray the value as a major thrust of the piece. After all selections had been categorized, categories which were similar were collapsed, such as "cooperation" and "teamwork, or "appreciation of difference" and "acceptance of handicaps." An additional team of raters of values in reader selections provided two interrater reliability scores--one based on the agreement between raters that a selection contained a particular values thrust (0.75), the second based on agreement between raters on the value (0.76).

Results

Two major findings: 1)the average reader of 100 years ago taught some value in approximately 65% of the selections in the book. The average number of selections with values content today is 35%, 2) the values of today are not only quantitatively different from the values of yesterday, they are also qualitatively different--from virtue, honesty, obedience, purity to good self-concept, appreciation of difference and regard for nature. The *preliminary data* based on selections from only second and third grade basals is reflected in the chart below.

Fig. 1 Values Content in Current Basal Readers (Top Twenty-Five Values)

Values Content	Number of Selections	Percentage of Total
Entertainment, content areas	*930*	*65*
1. Bravery	50	3.5
2. Appreciation of differences	49	3.4
3. Work ethic	32	2.2
4. Value of reading and writing	30	2.1
5. Self-concept	29	2.0
6. Familial love	29	2.0
7. Conservation of nature/animals	25	1.7
8. Perseverance	24	1.7
9. Gender equity	19	1.3
10. Consequences of wrong-doing/right-doing	17	1.2
11. Initiative/self-reliance	16	1.1
12. Cooperation/Teamwork	14	1.0
13. Self-sacrifice	12	0.9
14. Kindness	11	0.8
15. Wisdom	10	0.7
16. Forgiveness	9	0.6
17. Justice	9	0.6
18. Compassion	8	0.5
19. Freedom/patriotism	8	0.5
20. Honesty	8	0.5
21. Courtesy/manners	6	0.4
22. Generosity/altruism	5	0.3
23. Ingenuity/achievement	4	0.3
24. Service ethic/social action	3	0.2
25. Humility	3	0.2
Other	72	5.0
Total number	1,432	100%

Fig. 2 Top Twenty-Five Values in the McGuffey Readers

Value Content	Ranked	Percentage of selections teaching values:	
		Selections	Percentage*
Amusement, Information		*127*	*34%*
1. Trust in God's presence and power		23	6.1
2. Value of home/family/family love		21	5.5
3. Work ethic		18	4.7
4. Consequences of right/wrong doing		18	4.7
5. Bravery/courage		13	3.4
6. Honesty		10	2.6
7. Obedience		9	2.3

8.	Patience	9	2.3
9.	Kindness	9	2.3
10.	Generosity/Charity	9	2.3
11.	Value of rdg/wrtg/thinking	8	2.1
12.	Temperance	7	1.9
13.	Honor/respect for parents	7	1.9
14.	Gratitude	7	1.9
15.	Perseverance	6	1.6
16.	Gentleness	5	1.3
17.	Humility	5	1.3
18.	Futility of war	5	1.3
19.	Compassion	4	1.1
20.	Unselfishness	3	0.8
21.	Initiative	3	0.8
22.	Self-sacrifice	3	0.8
23.	Justice	3	0.8
24.	Teamwork	2	0.3
25.	Forgiveness	2	0.3
Other values		40	11.6

**"Rounding up" of percentages causes total percentage to be off slightly.

Total number of selections (grades 2-5):	**376**
Total number of selections w/values:	**249**
Percentage of selections w/ values:	**66**

Fig. 1 shows that 65% of selections in modern readers (1988-1995 state adoption periods). contained no traditional values focus; rather they focused on what might be termed current "cultural values" or "perceived market values." These selections (65% of the total) were informational (science, social studies, other content area materials), humorous.

The 40 selections (or 11.6 of the total) in the "Other" category represented a broad spectrum of traditional values teaching: obedience, gender equity, generosity, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, patience, loyalty, political action, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, but each representing only a fraction of a percentage point of the total.

Fig. 2 shows the ranking and categorization of values from the McGuffey readers of 1880.

Conclusions

Basal textbooks of the future will be anthologies of possibility compendia of issues, filled with definitions, multiple perspectives, and honest critiques from a variety of perspectives. Teachers and children will debate the merits of the positions. They will collect data, conduct interviews, read articles, invite speakers based perhaps on the issued raised in the text. Within these future learning communities, the teachers and students will decide some criteria for decision-making: can we live with this, is my personal choice different from others, is this okay, how

does this choice affect my neighborhood, my school, the planet? Textbooks and tests cannot give these answers, though they may begin to address compile, summarize the issues from multiple viewpoints, thus becoming compendia for further study in the classroom.

Educational Importance of the Study

Emphasis on values and ethics is again at the forefront of thinking in education. This paper provides historical context of values in readers, evaluation of readers in regard to values, and suggestions for teaching of values beyond the textbook. The study, having now been completed, identifies by publisher, the values taught in the current basal series and demonstrates alternatives to values teaching in the elementary classroom. One current direction of values teaching indicates that the use of children's literature and inquiry cycles will provide context for "lived-values" in the classroom of the future, making textbooks a resource rather the "the curriculum."